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Subject: Apostolic Christianity.

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# PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

## SERMONS

PREACHED BY

### HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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## APOSTOLIC CHRISTIANITY.

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"Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."—2. PET. I. 2-11.

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Men are very fond of looking at the divine government from that side where it can be the least seen, the least known, and where they are most subject to the errors of their own fluctuating imaginations, and to the obscurities of philosophy, falsely so called. It is far better, wherever we can, to look at the great truths of the divine moral government, at the mystery of God's dealing with men in this world, from the human side. Although there are obscurities, still the chances are better, and the instruction is more frequent, more clear, more comprehensible. And this is what is done in the passage that I have selected this morning. It is, in brief, the inspired disclosure of the purposes of God in respect to men. What it is that the grace of God is attempting to do with those who are called in the Lord Jesus Christ, is set forth. We are called of God. The voice that we hear is, therefore, no voice of nature, as something exterior to God. If man grows a certain way up, he grows according to that call of God which takes place through physical or material law, and addresses itself to his material or

physical being. But there comes a point of time in which that which is the true manhood has a higher call. There is an influence that is not exerted on a man by light or electricity, or by any of the curious phenomena in nature. There is a call that proceeds from God himself.

"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue."

In our version, it is "to glory and virtue," but in the original it is "by glory and virtue," as if the call was not by the nature of man, but by the nature of God. By his own being, by the glorious and virtuous power of his own spirit, he calls us up out of our lower life—out of that nature of ours which is physical.

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these [promises which are yea and amen; which are never broken; which are always fulfilled—for by *promise* we understand fulfillment], ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust [through the workings of the appetites and passions which belong to this physical frame, and which minister to being, to growth, and which give way, or are to give way, to the development of a higher life—which higher life is true Christian manhood]."

To that we are called by all the promises of God through Christ Jesus, that at last we may accomplish our destiny in becoming partakers of the divine nature. In what conditions and to what extent it is to take place, what is the limit of being, what is to be our equator, no one knows. It is only in this general vague way revealed that the destiny of the human soul is to come into the likeness and participation of the divine nature.

The apostle goes on to say,

"On account of this, [*besides this*, it is in our version: *by reason of this*, or *on account of this*, is the meaning of the original] giving all diligence."

You are called. The call is one which is to be answered. There is to be working together of the inspiration of the divine spirit and human endeavor according to that other passage, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you."

"On account of this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue."

What is faith? Supersensuousness. Well, what is supersensuousness? It is all that truth which exists beyond the discernment of the senses. Whatever the ear can hear, or the eye can see, or the nose can smell, or the tongue can taste, or the hand can handle—that faith has nothing to do with. That belongs to the senses. There is a large range of truth there. But above this line—that is, beyond the realm of physical science—there is also a large



amount of truth, both of existence, and of law, and of various attributes; and faith is that moral intuition, that spiritual insight, that sense of the soul, by which we discern the great invisible world, and all its realities.

“Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

In its most general, in its generic definition, faith is the mind's perception of the great interior realm—of that substantial truth which is above the senses, and which therefore cannot be discerned by them.

A Christian man is one who lives as seeing Him who is invisible. He lives by faith—by eyes that are not on the outside—by soul-eyes—by moral intuitions.

Now the apostle says, “Add to that faith virtue.” What he meant by the word *virtue* was not what we mean by that word. Our understanding of the word *virtue* usually is that it signifies the opposite of vice—purity; but in the apostolic mind the idea was that to this faith, which is the mind's mode of dealing with invisible things, should be added, I will not say work, but rather conduct, practicalness, development. The word *virtue*, according to its old meaning, carried the implication that what a man wrought out was right and noble; but its principal idea was practicalness. It was substantially righteousness. So the apostle says, “Add to this vision-seeing tendency of yours, which may etherialize itself and go off in a cloudy dream—add to this the practice of a wise and righteous kind. Add to your faith virtue, in the old Roman sense—true manhood.”

By the way, I have jumped a thought. It does not say *Add to*, in the original; it says, *Provide*, or *develop. in*. It is the preposition *in* and not the preposition *to*, that is employed. It is as if he had had in his mind the thought of a plant, and had said, “Now, let the first joint be faith; and out of that develop another joint, and let that be virtue; and then, in your virtue—that is, out of your virtue—develop knowledge; and out of your knowledge develop temperance; and out of your temperance develop patience; and out of your patience, opening and unfolding, develop godliness; and so on, showing the idea of the successive evolution of one out of another. According to our version, it is simply as though ducat were to be thrown upon ducat, and there were to be an accumulation in the sense of juxtaposition; but the idea which is conveyed by the original is that of unfolding one grace out of another, or adding grace to grace by extension and evolution.

Says the apostle, “Add to your faith, or in your faith, virtue; in

other words, develop out of your faith virtue—that is, practical godliness; and in your virtue or from out of your virtue, develop knowledge.”

By this is not meant, evidently, that knowledge which we gather by our senses—scientific knowledge, ideas, facts; but a higher knowledge—that subtle intuition of truth which men have who live high and noble lives. A man of great conscience has a sense, a knowledge, of principle which is higher than any law or custom can point out. A man who cultivates his taste has a finer sense and knowledge of beauty than a man who does not. A man who dwells largely in figures and mathematics has a sense of numbers and proportions which does not belong to other men. The knowledge which is spoken of here is that knowledge which is in the nature of moral intuition.

That which is meant by *temperance* is not that almost local signification of the term which we are accustomed to give it. By *temperance* is meant self-government. Originally that word signified moderation, not only in eating and drinking, but in everything. Now, it signifies, technically, restraint from drinking alone; but originally it signified restraint of every kind, self-government of every kind; and it may better be rendered *self-government* or *self-restraint*.

And in temperance, or from it, develop patience—endurance—the spirit of bold, courageous, quiet waiting, so that you can go as an arrow goes shot out of a bow, or hang as an arrow hangs in the quiver through unnumbered days, and be an arrow still.

It is a great and glorious thing for a man to have vigor, power, accomplishing energy; and it is equally great and glorious, and it is harder, for a man who has energy and vigor and power to have also restfulness and endurance and waiting ability. No man can beat down time and events; but many a man is too much for time and events, by reason of patient waiting.

“Add to knowledge, temperance; to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness.”

That is, let your patience be not stoical. Let it not be stubborn, obstinate, sulky. Let it be the waiting and endurance of a man who believes that God reigns, and that all the affairs of the universe are in his hands, and shall work toward good. Let it be that patience which comes from godliness.

“And to godliness, brotherly kindness.”

That is, let there be in your godliness a warm sympathy and affection, not only for yourself, but for your family; for all your near neighbors; for all your neighbors that are more remote; for



all your townspeople; for your church; for other churches; for un-church folks; for all the world.

“And to brotherly kindness, charity.”

That is the universal form of love. Local affection and universal affection—add these.

“For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren [idle or ungrowing] nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

That is, we gain a knowledge of Christ by becoming like him—not by studying, not by thinking, not by meditation, except in an indirect way; but by imitating him. He who puts his mind in the attitude of the divine mind, and gathers within himself the virtues which constitute the divine nature, and holds them in supreme activity or supreme rest, as the case may be—he, out of his experience, shall neither be idle nor unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. So, we learn of Christ here that new Gospel which the Spirit is continually interpreting in the heart of every one who lives according to the mind and the will of God.

Here, then, is the apostle's conception of a Christian man's character, development and destiny; and I remark:

I. This ideal destiny of man is one that shall lead him into the likeness, into the sympathy, and into the participation of the divine nature.

John tells us that we are sons of God; but what that means he did not know, and nobody has found out. The knowledge of what we shall be is reserved until we shall have a better understanding than we can have in this state of being.

Men are striving to extricate themselves from environment. But we know little with certainty. It is hard to draw the superior down within the grasp of the inferior. We cannot take in, with our understanding, the truths of the higher sphere. The reason why we know so little of the divine nature is, that we have so little in ourselves that interprets it to us. We have a few hints and dim analogies of the other life; but it is evident that we are unfolding and rising toward something higher. We are tending away from the point at which we began. We are not simply lengthening the chain which links us to the future, but we are evidently carrying up a nature and a character by successive steps from a lower to a higher condition. We are building a structure of precious stones; and the work will be continued until the top-stone is laid. We begin our characters at the point of selfishness: we are to end them at the point of disinterested benevolence. We begin in the realm of animalism: we are to come to true manhood by that path which

leads us in the direction of the divine nature and of divine excellence. No man has reached his own proper self until he has in him the recognition of all that is around about him. As no mother is a full mother who has not in her heart the sense of her household; as her mother nature is that nature which includes in its wise government all her children; so the time is to be when a man will come to himself, not by what he has, but by what he is—by his sympathy with others, when selfishness shall be gone, and he shall be like God, and shall have touched that large sphere of benevolence which shall make him recognize in every other man a brother. There are dim intimations of man's experience by which he develops his way from the physical into the spiritual.

The Bible says that we are growing toward the divine nature. Men may scoff at it, or they may blindly rejoice in it. I have groped to see if there are not at least some traces along the line of this march, and I think I see some. I observe, for instance, in the progress of the lower animal in man up toward the higher—in this progress from mere physicalness toward intelligence—that when it reaches the human race, the difference between undeveloped men and men who are developed, is, the power to discern the invisible. That is, men whose forces are muscular are inferior to men whose forces are mental. When we come to judge between one and another of the higher classes of civilized life, it is observable that the development of those men who have the most power of working in a vacuum, if I may so say, are men who have the largest spiritual developments—men who have developed away from the physical. The line of dignity and refinement and earthly immortality does not run from the ineffable and spiritual toward the coarse and physical, but from the coarse and physical toward the spiritual and ineffable. So that, looking at it as a scientific fact, as men grow in life the line is away from the sensuous toward the super-sensuous. And when the Apostle says that we are to be partakers of the divine nature, I say that the declaration is in harmony with everything that I see going on in human nature. We rise away from the animal toward the spiritual. We advance from lower manhood to higher manhood. The line is from the flesh toward the spirit. Therefore, it might naturally be expected that Christian character would consummate itself in the development of the divine nature. That is the highest form of spiritual existence; and when the Apostle says this is so, I am prepared to receive it and to rejoice over it.

Many able scientists are investigating the road through which men came up to their present state; but it is of little conse-



quence to me where I came from. It is of a great deal of consequence, though, where I am going to. I confess to some curiosity as to my origin; and I am far from saying that it will not do any good to trace the history of the origin of the human race, and of everything else in this world. I regard the labors of Mr. Darwin with profound interest; and I believe the world owes him a great debt of gratitude. Although I may not accept all his speculations, I thank him for any facts, or any deductions from facts, which have the appearance of nearly definite truth. I do not participate a particle in the revulsion and horror which some feel at the idea that men sprang from some lower form of existence. Only show me that I am clear of the monkeys, and I am perfectly willing that it should be true that, millions of years ago, my ancestors sprang from them. Let there be difference enough, and distance enough, between these animals and me, and I do not care how nearly my progenitors may have been related to them. I would as lief have sprung from a monkey as from some men that I know of. If I look at the Patagonians, or the Nootka Sound Indians, or the Esquimaux of the extreme North, it does not seem to me that there is much to choose, as to parentage, between them and our lower animals. I do not care so much about the past, as I do about the future. It is not of the slightest importance that I should trace my early associations back to a million years ago. All my life is looking forward. I do not care where I came from: I want to know where I am going. If I am going with the animal, earth to earth, that is sad enough; but if I am under that attraction, that mighty power, which calls the sun to make summer in the bosom of winter, which all the winds and ice cannot resist, which generates heat, and which out of heat brings life universal, infinite, multitudinous, innumerable—if I am under that power, and it is still drawing you and me and all along in these paths, and it is vouchsafed that we may be partakers of the divine nature, then that is something that I want to know, and something that I want to feel.

Now, let men bore in the rear if they will: it is for me to look up and see where I am going. For, if it is life and immortality, and joy ineffable and full of glory there, I care not for the nest. I care not for the skin that I sloughed off ages ago. It is the future that I care for. The Christian has little to fear, I think, if it will only lead on to this. Not to deny the past, nor to be indifferent to the things of the past, it is not probable that we shall, in your day or mine, find out everything that God ever thought of or did. It is far more important that we should have faith in the future, and know which way to fly when we have the inspiration of emigration,

than that we should know what took place myriads of ages ago, or what was the condition of the race then.

II. No man was ever converted to Christianity at one flash. No man ever built a house at a single blow, except in a summer dream. When we shut our eyes, and are architects of reverie, we can build worlds; we can multiply the dew-drop till it swings like a crystal sphere in the realms of space. We can create cities, we can cause millions of troops to spring up, we can populate heaven and earth, by reverie; but no man ever did anything worth doing—anything complex, large, noble—by reverie. Many suppose that when a man is converted by the power of God, the Spirit of God acts as the lightning acts—instantaneously. But suppose it does, did you ever know the lightning to strike a mountain and instantly clear away all the dross and leave nothing but pure gold, in the shape of coin, with the superscription of the government upon it, and waiting for men to use it? When you see the metal in a mountain set free by a stroke of lightning, you may expect to see a man set free from the circumstances of life by conversion with overpowering suddenness.

The conversion by which the spirit of God starts a man, just starts him—that is all. It turns him away from the wrong direction. It turns him toward the right model. It gives his heart an inspiration for things higher, and then says to him, “Work out your salvation.” He is salvable in whom God has built a salvable character; and the work of building such a character is complex, and must be accomplished by successive steps. You cannot anticipate the various stages of its growth. It is impossible for a man to begin a Christian life with those virtues which come only through patient waiting. There are many joys which are experienced at the beginning of a Christian life. There are many songs that are sung then; but they are generally songs which, compared with the highest experiences of Christian life, are like ballads compared with the symphonies of Beethoven. A man, on entering a Christian life, has some sweet experiences; but they are rather excellences, exhilarations, novelties, rareties, as it were, than those more blessed experiences which a man has in a ripened Christian state. They are like the experiences of early love. I believe in early love; but I believe that it is ungrown love. Beautiful to the eye is the apple-tree that to-day spreads abroad its vast dome of blossoms; but when October comes it will be more beautiful in its crimson fruit, bending its boughs till they touch the ground, than it was in its blossoms. And I hold that where a man loves truly, affection in him grows all the way up from the beginning to the end. Young



love is foolish compared with old, disciplined, matured love. Love, like everything else, must be educated before it can reach its perfection. And in Christian life I believe there are great triumphs, and joys, and ecstasies at the beginning; but ah! let nobody look back to the time of his conversion, and say, "I would that I could feel as I did then!" You ought to feel transports now where you felt one single emotion then. Early Christian experience is a single instrument playing: late Christian experience, where it is genuine, is a band of twenty instruments playing in harmony. No man is born into a full Christian life. If he becomes a completely developed Christian, it is by the attainment of one Christian quality, and then the evolution of another out of that, and then of another out of that, until he shall reach the sphere and element of the God-head. Christian character is to be wrought out by long experience and by constant endeavor. Who ever threw an acorn into the ground and at once got an oak all ripened? Christian manhood is the result of a mighty education and of long evolution.

I think that the ideas which are popular in respect to the cleansing and converting power of the Spirit of God have an element in them which it is important and desirable to retain; but to suppose that the grace of God does the whole work for a man is contrary to the uniform testimony of Scripture, and contrary to the universal experience of God's people.

I may also say here, that while I have a great respect for those who are seeking a higher life, I would thank them not to use language which misleads. I believe that a man can find a realm of peace and of sympathy with God which shall be like summer to his soul; but when men tell me that they have reached perfection in Christian life, I laugh. I do not laugh in ridicule or scorn: I laugh for the same reason that I do when I see a child building its playhouse, and making believe that it is a real house, or going through its play-life and making believe that it is real life. Do you suppose that any man is built according to the proportions of those elements which I have enumerated to you? If that faith, and that virtue, and that knowledge, and that patience, and that godliness, and that brotherly love, and that charity, or love universal, of which I have been speaking, are to be unfolded in a man till he shall be a microcosm of God himself, do you suppose the work is perfected in this world? When a man says, "I have perfect peace," I believe him. I believe there are conditions in which a man may lean on God. But I believe that there is a great peace which is far from being completely perfected, and which is always unfolding.

A man who has a musical ear goes into a workshop and sees

lying there large quantities of material of various kinds—iron, and steel, and copper, and brass—and he says, “Let me make these available.” And he takes the various kinds of metal, and puts them into a furnace, and melts them, and pours the liquid which they form into a mold; and when it is cool and brought out it is a bell. Such is the result of the combination of all these incoherent substances. And when it is struck it is musical. And he says, “I have hit it! It is perfect!” But it is a monotone; and after some thought he says, “No, I have not reached perfection yet. There is more material here. What if I should make another bell?” So he goes to work and makes a second bell. And then he makes a third; and then a fourth. And some musician says, “Hang them up in yonder tower”; and they are lifted up into the tower; and, swinging there, they ring out through the air glorious chants which call men to God’s house. The man has now, not one bell, but eight bells—and they are but a few. If you have listened, in Antwerp, to the vast chime of bells in that great tower, as they swing, filling the whole atmosphere with music; if you have stood there and heard its notes as they sounded out through the frosty air of the morning, how imperfect would seem to you a chime of eight bells, as compared with the swarm of bells of which that chime is composed!

God has lifted up the spire or tower of the human soul, and has set in it some thirty bells; and they are all to be brought into accord. There are two or three that strike bass notes musically; but it is our business to bring harmony into the whole mighty collection of musical instruments that are swinging in the belfry of man’s soul.

No man is perfect until all his faculties are brought into harmonious play. There is not a single thing in my watch which, being taken out, would leave it good for anything. God never put a faculty in a man which was not necessary; and if we are to be perfect, every one of our faculties must be developed and used. As God looks upon men, they are not perfect until they are built up into the lines and lineaments of the Lord Jesus Christ, and have partaken in part of the divine nature. Then they are sons of God; and to be a son of God is something transcendently glorious. Eye hath not seen it. Ear hath not heard it. I would go around the world on a pilgrimage of curiosity and holy ardor to look at such a man. For I think there is nothing on earth that could be compared for glory and marvelousness with a man who has been builded by the hand of God into all those proportions which are to make him a son of God.



III. The glorious ideal of Christianity, compared with all the current ideas, stands up in bright and rebuking contrast. How many are calling men to church-membership! How many are calling men to morality! How many men are called to philosophy! How many men are called to philanthropy! But such is not the call of God. God calls men to be partakers of the divine nature. And the providence of divine grace is working on that pattern incessantly. What the gardener means, and what Nature means, are very different things. What the grape-vine means is to drive out its branches, rank and strong, far and wide. What the gardener means is grapes; and therefore he cuts back the vine on every side. "Let me grow," says the vine. "Bear," says the vintner. "Give me more room for my leaves," says the vine. "Then give me more grapes for my wine," says the gardener. Men in this world are seeking to develop forces that shall be for their pleasure. God is meeting those who are his own with blows at every step, and beating them back. He is tempering this man's zeal by various overthrows. He is tempering that man's pride by various shames. He is subjecting another man to such tests as shall compel him to come to endurance. In various ways God's providence is meddling with us. We are all praying that God's will may be done; but we do not like the answer to our prayer when it comes. A man prays in the morning, and says, "Dear Lord, be pleased to let thy will be done in me as it is in heaven," and he goes to his task; and forgetting his prayer, which he did not know the meaning of, and feeling what a lordly man he is, and carrying himself in an arrogant way in business, he arouses the opposition of men, and he meets with perplexities at every step. This man is swindling him; that man is demanding more than he is entitled to; another man is drawing him into some difficulty; and he says, "I do not know why I should be so vexed and harassed." The man is praying that God's will may be done in him. God's will is love; but man's will is pride and self-seeking and domineering. He wishes to be governor. He wishes to draw everything toward him; but God wishes to draw everything out of him toward his fellow men. God is kind to this man. He would educate him to a higher conception of manhood. But the man would educate himself to a lower and earthly conception.

There are ten thousand experiences which befall us in this life, we are so susceptible to the influences that are at work around about us. There are spheres of phenomena that apparently lie outside of the influences which affect us; but everything works together for good to them who love God, we are told, whether it be

tears or smiles; whether it be groans or laughter; whether it be sorrow or joy; whether it be prosperity or adversity; whether it be success or failure; whether it be love or hatred. All things, whatever they may be, work together for good to them that love God. Love is the universal reconciliation—the universal solvent. This glorious idea of Christian character is that which is in the mind of God, though it may not be that which is in the mind of man.

I send my child to one school or another with a view to his future life. He may be too young to be in sympathy with the object for which he is sent, and may ask for this indulgence or that change; but I deny his request because I do not think it is compatible with that better and nobler development which I am seeking for him.

God, who is the universal Father, tells us that he is seeking, not what we wish, but what we *need*. He is seeking to bring us into that glorious estate in which we shall be partakers of the divine nature. And so this work is going on.

It is said of Solomon's temple, that it was built without the sound of the hammer. The soul is a temple; and God is silently building it, by night and by day. Precious thoughts are building it. Disinterested love is building it. Joy in the Holy Ghost is building it. All-penetrating faith is building it. Gentleness, and meekness, and sweet solicitude, and sympathy are building it. All virtue and all goodness are workmen upon that invisible temple which every man is.

**"Ye are the temple of God."**

The foundations are laid, the lines are drawn, and silently, night and day, the walls are carried up, tier after tier being laid; and when the temple is built it shall seem as if it were composed of precious stones—of beryl, and amethyst, and topaz, and diamond—so that at last when it is completed, and there comes the shout of "Grace, grace, unto it!" it shall be a temple built in darkness to reveal light; built in sorrow to produce a joy which shall never die. God is building in us something that transcends anything that man ever knew; he is building it by the power of his might; and he is building it by us, and in us, and through us, and in spite of our implorations that he would desist. Blessed be God, who builds though we seek to hinder his building, and though we would sometimes even pull down and destroy that which he is building!

IV. If these views are generally correct, we may see in them the correction of many of the popular sayings and tendencies of the day. I am met at every step by those who say, "I ought to conform to the laws of my being." I read *ad nauseam* about going back to



the laws of nature, or back to nature; and people are saying, "If we only could get back to simple nature, how easily society would get along!"

I tell you, nature does not lie in that direction. Nature does not lie backward. Which way is the eagle's nature, where he lies in his nest, or where he is, in the might of his power, poised under the sun, on a summer day?

Is a man's nature that which he is born to, or that which he comes to by unfolding? Is a man's nature that which is furthest from, or nearest to, that which God meant should be the final estate to which he is to come? Is a man's nature in the cradle, or in perfect, ripe manhood?

You tell me that the state of nature is a state of blessedness? What you call nature is a state of savageism. It is weakness. It is ignorance. It is inexperience. At first, nature is nothingness. Then comes gradual acquisition. But a man is all the time groping toward himself. A man's real nature lies far beyond his present sphere. Nature in a man is not what he came from, but what he is going to.

I am not, therefore, to take my models and patterns from behind; but this one thing I am to do: I am to forget the things which are behind, and to look on beyond, and to take my conceptions of true manhood and noble nature from the ideals which I form of God; and they are interpreted in my experience by God's Spirit. In what, therefore, are men more deceived in this world, than in those who seem to have been, or who are supposed to have been successful? They wrap themselves up in self. They build houses for themselves. They live in them with great outward splendor. I do not object to any amount of outward splendor, provided that the inward filling up is equivalent to or in proportion with it. But men of great learning, men of great managing power, men who have wealth, men who have force, men who have carried through vast worldly enterprises, are pointed out to the young as successful. Alas! That which they have achieved is not true success. It is outwardness. It is success for this world only. True success lies far deeper than that. He has succeeded who, in spite of envy, and jealousy, and selfishness, and pride, and every demoniac influence, has learned still and steadily and always to love. Love is the fulfilling of the law. That supreme law of God's universe by which we are being transformed into the likeness of God, is fulfilled in that one word. He only is a truly successful man who has something more in this world than outward life can give. Wealth has its uses, and knowledge has its uses; and we have the

apostle saying, "I am but sounding brass and tinkling cymbal if I have nothing more than that."

On the other hand, if these thoughts of the unfolding of man's nature toward the divine, be true, then men around about us have more in them than we have been wont to suppose. Men are not to be estimated by their values in society. We are to value them according to the standard which God gives us when he hands down the golden reed of the sanctuary by which all things in heaven are measured, and by which all things on earth are to be measured. He who is meek, and lowly, and patient, and self-sacrificing, and Christ-like, may wear weeds, may be covered with sackcloth, may be clad in a beggar's gabardine, may be poor outwardly; and yet he may be great by the signs and tokens of sonship inwardly. But we do not know what men are by that which they have reached here.

When Shakespeare lay in the cradle, like any other child, and made soft and cooing sounds like those of a dove, who ever could have dreamed, listening to that infant's prattle, what songs he would yet sing for the ages to hear? And yet, it was in him; and by working he came to himself.

In life, who can tell what men are? When I lived in Cincinnati, as I was going to the city one day, I saw a man breaking stone by the side of the road. He looked like any other stone-breaking man; but he was an educated German gentleman who came to this country, and had no employment. He had the common sense, rather than to starve, to take the first business that he could find. So he hired himself to break stone with ordinary workmen.

I remember a hostler that my father hired in Cincinnati, who used to sit in the kitchen. As I went in and out I saw that he was constantly occupied with his book; and I found that it was a geography on a mathematical projection; and I found that it was as familiar, almost, as A B C to him. I questioned him about Latin (for I saw that he had a Latin book), and I found that he could read and speak Latin. I asked him if he was acquainted with Greek, and he said, "I can read it, but I cannot speak it." Here was this man scrubbing my father's horse, and he knew more in his little finger than I knew in my whole body. If you look inside of men, and see what is there; if the dross is purged away, and you behold that which is to constitute manhood, and which is to be glorified, and which is to last throughout the eternal ages, the last shall be first, and the first shall be last. There is going to be a great coming down and a great going up in the day of disclosure. For, he who has the sovereignty of God in him (and that is not might but quality); he who has the creative power, the



vision-power, the enduring power of divine love, however poor he may be on earth, whatever may be his lot, whatever may be the function of his hand—he, if our eye could but see it, is already beginning to shoot out the light of glory that is in him. The proudest man that lives in the city, and rolls in tides of wealth, and indulges in pride and selfishness and self-seeking, may be outshone by the poor cripple, who goes limping through the world, and who manages to get only just enough to keep soul and body together, and creeps down night by night to divide that with some other miserable wretch. Your queens, your kings, your merchant princes, your great men of the earth, when God looks upon them, go down, down, down; and the poor in spirit, the humble, the outcast, go up, and up, and up. The great men of the earth—those that seek themselves, and those that are the most conspicuous—in the sight of God have not the development, though they may have the seed of that nature which is to be eternal and divine.

Christian brethren, how hard a thing it is to be a Christian! How hard? No, not any harder than it is not to be one. To live is hard. Whichever you take is hard. You may change the kind of hard, but all life is hard. A man has to take up his cross as much to serve the devil as he does to serve God. It costs him so much pain and care and trouble to be wicked as it does to be virtuous, and after a little while a great deal more; because the ways of providence are ways of work toward purity and disinterestedness and nobility; and men who are in those ways have on their side God and all his angels; while wicked men are working against God and his angels, and are therefore working greatly against the current. To begin to be a Christian may be called a difficult thing; but it is so only at the beginning. How great a thing it is to be a Christian, if it be—not to join a church, not to say prayers, not to pay for the support of the Gospel, not to perform any outward service, but to aspire to the royalty of that glorious manhood which shall make us children of God, so that we shall resemble him; so that looking into our souls as into a mirror, we shall gather some small but real conception of the nature and beauty and desirableness of that God toward whom we are going.

I call you, young men and maidens, not to any church; I call you not to any mere low conception of morality; I call you not to sectarianism; I call you to the spirit of the living God; I call you to the acceptance and recognition of the mercy of God which awaits you in heaven; I call you to remember that by the spirit of Jesus Christ you are made, if you will, the sons of God, and that you are to live toward God in the hope of being like him, and rejoicing with him forever and forever.

Oh, to them who hear the call of God the earth is conquered! To them there is no poverty; to them there are no sorrows. The beginnings of triumphs which are to be consummated in heaven, are sent down to God's people here. They who are living so as to develop in themselves this divine likeness have already that power which makes all things theirs. The heaven is theirs. The earth is theirs. They belong to each other. They all belong to Christ. His providence enwraps them. His grace is cheering them, even as the summer warmth cheer the whole continent to-day. They are surrounded by the love and mercy of God.

I call you to a higher destiny than any which lies within the bounds of this horizon. I call you to a better companionship than any church can give you. I call you "to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant." I call you by the aspirations of your better nature. I call you by those vague longings which you have, but which you perhaps cannot interpret, and which make you feel like a child that is homesick, or that has lost its father, and knows not where to find him. I call you by all the sorrow which you have experienced on earth, and by all the joy that you know yourself to be capable of experiencing in the land which is to come. I call you to glory and honor and immortality.

Count not yourselves unworthy of this blessedness. Go not with the grunting swine. Go not with the lion nor the bear. Give not yourself away to power, or lust, or momentary pleasure, that, like the light of the sun on the agitated waves, flashes and goes out. I call you to that which is behind the stars, and higher than they—to the God, unalterable, ineffable, eternal.



## PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON. \*

Why hast thou granted unto us, O Lord, such treasure in our children? How couldst thou spare them to us? How didst thou dare to send their unsullied souls into this world? Why were we so ignorant and so inexperienced? Why should we love so much, and know so little? Why should we be unable to transmit to our children the knowledge which by mistake or under trial and divine guidance we have gained, so that every one must try again, and learn through his own mistakes and ignorance and waywardness? Why were pride and selfishness set to bring up these children that they may become the sons of God? Why is our ignorance put over against their dark minds to give them light? We wonder that thou shouldst do so—thou whose wisdom is inscrutable. This is only one of the multitude of those things around about us which tell us that Thou art still saying, "What I do now ye know not, but ye shall know hereafter." Yet, much are we learning of thy purposes. Thou hast sent these precious children to us to teach us. Who of us all would care to bend the back of pride and yield ourselves up one to another? Strength will not give way to strength; but to weakness how supple is pride, and how does all our manhood kneel down to worship at the cradle! Who of us could teach another the self-sacrifice of love? And yet, thou art in every household awakening that love which knows no weariness, and which yields itself day and night. Who could teach us how to live, not for self, but for another? But thou art teaching us to pour out the best gifts of our lives in thought and in feeling for our children. Oh, that there were the understanding in us to teach us how to widen our sphere, and to live for all as we live for ourselves, and to rise through the majesty of weakness and the divinity of love and self-sacrifice, in the royal character of the children of God!

Lord, we thank thee for this blessed revelation of the cradle. Holy men have spoken, and by thy Son Jesus also we have learned, the counsel and the will of God; but there are voices still chanting thy will in the household. Angels still are calling to us. We are still taught by the power of the heart through the little children that are granted unto us.

God bless the little children that have been this morning brought forth by rejoicing parents in the midst of sympathizing brethren. These parents have signified their purpose to bring them up in the fear of the Lord. Help them to do it. May their hearts never be discouraged. May they never give up hope.

If these children should not grow up, have compassion upon the hour of darkness, when love weeps, and the heart seems broken. Lord, thou who hast known the very sepulcher itself, and all the sorrows which lead to it, canst counsel those who are bereaved. Sorrow is vincible by divine love. But if these children grow up may they not depart from the nurture and admonition of the Lord. May they be so trained that virtue shall be the habit of their life, and that piety shall spring from virtue. May they blossom into the manhood of Christian life.

We pray, O Lord, if any of them shall wander off upon their voyage, and strange currents shall take them from their path, or winds, descending, shall sweep them away, that thou wilt bring them back again. Thou who didst rise up and rebuke the wind and the wave and save the ship, remember those whose bark is tempest-tossed; those who seem perishing in their children while thou seemest to them to sleep. For years they have cried

\* Immediately following the baptism of children.

out unto thee, and longed for succor; and thou hast not come; and still the wind blows, and their heavens are dark. Lord Jesus, appear for such. Appear for all those who are seeking thee in the way of self-sacrifice and of love for others, and whose way is hard, and whose purposes seem to ripen into near blessings. Will the Lord inspire them with faith; with a patient waiting for the Lord with a trust which death itself cannot move. Thou canst not do evil. Thou wilt fulfill thy promises. Thou wilt not forsake to the uttermost, nor to the end, those who trust in thee.

And now, we beseech of thee that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon all the young who are in our midst. May they grow up into loveliness, and strength, and fruitfulness, in all things that are just, and true, and noble before God and before men. Bless all the efforts which we are making for their instruction in the Sabbath-schools under our charge, in the Bible-classes, and in all the ways in which we seek to redeem them from ignorance, and to shield them from temptation, and to arm them with knowledge and with virtue.

We pray that those who go forth to visit the wandering and the outcast, those who go to minister to the sick and the imprisoned, may more and more be clothed with all the sweetness and power of the love of Christ. And may their Gospel—the Gospel of a living and loving heart—never have an end so long as they dwell upon the earth.

We pray for all thy dear people of every name. We beseech of thee that thou wilt remember, this morning, all who are gathered here with their thanksgivings or their sorrows, with their hopes or their fears. Look upon those who consecrate themselves anew to the service of the Lord. Look upon all those who are just beginning the service of Christ openly and avowedly. Look upon those who are in the midst of the battle of life, and who are still striving though they are drawing near to the end of it. Prepare thine angels to convoy them, and to bring them with great joy and rejoicing to their Father's house.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt grant a blessing to rest upon the preachers who are among us. May they feel the ties of brotherhood and the inspiration of God's blessing resting upon them and us in common. And may our hearts go out after them. May we feel that we are related to all who love and strive in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grant thy blessing to rest upon the churches of this city. Revive thy work in them. Fulfill all thy gracious purposes which thy provinces have indicated.

Remember thy servants who are in convention assembled from all parts of this land, met, in thy providence, to take counsel together on important subjects touching thy work. We pray that they may be filled with the Spirit of Jesus Christ the Master, and that piety may be adorned and made lovely in their midst, and that all their deliberations may be inspired by that wisdom which cometh down from on high, and that they may return to their several spheres of labor for a year of more abundant ingathering.

Look upon all the churches whose representatives are gathered together and are holding council upon things which pertain to those interests of thy Zion which are under their charge.

Unite thy people more and more. May they cease to dispute with each other. May they cease to build high walls of division. May they cease to magnify the exterior. More and more may the inner spirit grow; and more and more, by the spirit, may there come that unity which has long been sighed for and sought after by thine own children on earth, and which was prayed for by our Master.

Grant that the name of the Lord Jesus Christ may be known in all the



earth as a name of power. Give victory to thy servants who are preaching, in foreign lands, and making known the unsearchable riches of the Saviour among the heathen.

We pray for all classes and conditions of men everywhere—for the oppressed; for the ignorant; for those who are bound by superstitions. We pray for the coming of that day whose morning light we see upon the edge of the mountains. Star of the Morning, come down, that the Sun of righteousness may come up. Oh, grant that, at last, the light may burst forth in universal radiance, and that all the earth, redeemed at length from sorrow, may cease its wail, and its requiem, and chant its song of victory, until the voices of thy people throughout the world—the whole family named of God in heaven and upon earth—may unite together praising the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost! *Amen.*

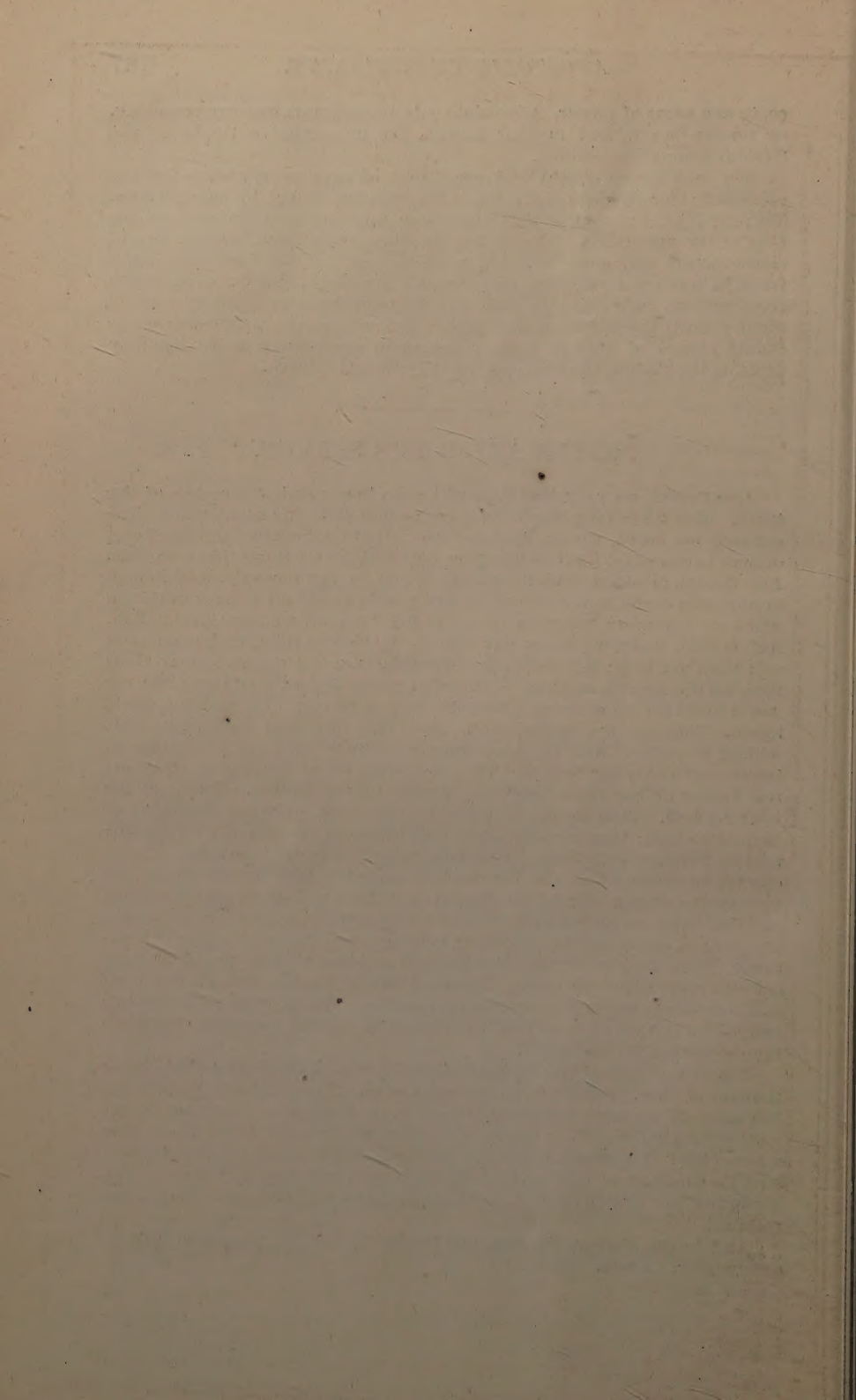
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### PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we pray that thou wilt open to our souls the realms of thy truth. May we feel thy dawns if we cannot hear thy silent voice. The ear hath not heard, the eye hath not seen, it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive, what things thou hast laid up for those that love thee. And though in olden times thou didst reveal to thy servants, and though in later days thou hast disclosed to thy people great and wonderful things, there are yet more things to be made known than we have dreamed of. But, O God, while we know our weakness, this one thing we know: thou art; thou art love; thy realm is universal; thou art the victorious God; thou art the longing and the loving God whom Jesus Christ came into the world to set forth before us. We behold his suffering. We read the secret lesson. Thou art the healing God. Thou dost bear and forbear, and art willing to suffer. And in thine infinite altitude, thou art not sitting in leisure and enjoying thyself. Thou art everywhere the Nurse. Thou art the Father of the father and the Mother of the mother. Thou art the working God. Thou art the God that by tears dost interpret something of thyself to men; that by heart-ache dost interpret to men the household; that by parental solicitude, by yearnings, by forethought and care of men one for another; by all the sweetness of early love; by the plentitude and variety of things good; by the discipline of life; and by all that is noblest and best in us, art giving us the letters which spell thine own self, above all, above ages, above the accumulated treasures and riches of other generations. Thou art greater than our greatest and best things. Supernal, thou art still everywhere on earth. Thou art full of justice; and though thou dost use pain as a means of chastising, yet love is regent, and all things are swayed by it, that thou mayest bring home to thyself sons and daughters for everlasting joy and glory.

Let us understand our calling in Christ Jesus. Lead us into that higher thought of thee. Make life more sacred to us. May the inside of our soul-life seem to us more real than the outward flaming of the sun. What matters it what we eat, or drink, or whether we lie down or rise up, or how we are clad? It is after these things that the Gentiles seek. Oh, that we may seek the kingdom of God and its righteousness, and that this may be our joy in life, our stay in conflict, our hope in dying, and the realization of our waking!

And to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, shall be the praise forever and forever. *Amen.*





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